

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



Emergency Preparedness Guide

WWW.HEALTHYMS.COM • 1-866-HLTHY4U

Mississippi Public Health Leaders Launch Year-Long Emergency Preparedness Campaign

On March 29, 2005, the Mississippi Department of Health (MDH) launched the *Healthy-Secure-Mississippi* campaign, a statewide initiative designed to inform Mississippians about emergency preparedness, public health threats and emergency response.

The *Healthy-Secure-Mississippi* campaign targets Mississippi residents, their families, and their communities, educating them about public health programs and services now available statewide in the event of an emergency or crisis.

"This campaign will allow us to work with partners and civic organizations throughout the state to better prepare all of us to protect our families and our communities," said State Health Officer Dr. Brian Amy. "We cannot do it alone. The Department of Health has been working hard to put programs in place throughout the state designed specifically to respond to crisis events; it

is important to let Mississippians know what has been done and what resources are available."

The campaign was developed after conducting a statewide assessment to discover the concerns of Mississippi residents. One of the research components included a survey of professionals who work in hospitals, law enforcement, emergency services and the public health arena. Some key findings of this research included:

- Bioterrorism was ranked as the number one public health emergency threat; and
- Nearly 80 percent say preparing for a terrorist threat is very important.

A public opinion poll was also conducted. One discovery was that nearly 60 percent of Mississippians say terrorism is an issue that they have a great deal of concern about and feel unprepared to handle.

"Our research shows that Mississippi residents are very concerned about their ability to appropriately respond to bioterrorism," said Dr. Amy. "We are on the front lines of every public health threat in Mississippi and have worked to install new programs and people to respond to crisis events, enabling us to be

well-prepared to protect the community in the event of a public health crisis or terror-related incident. Through this initiative, we will spread the word and use resources we have put in place to help prepare our communities to face whatever emergency or crisis may arise." ♦



State Health Officer Dr. Brian Amy announces the *Healthy-Secure-Mississippi* campaign at a news event in March.

Inside...

Mississippi: Ready In An Emergency...2

Message From The State Health Officer...2

Public Health Threats: What You Should Know...3

We're Working to Protect You!...3

Family Readiness Checklist...4

In this supplement, you will find more information on the available resources throughout the state and the ways you can prepare and protect your family. For more information about Healthy-Secure-Mississippi or other important MDH initiatives, please visit www.HealthyMS.com or call 1-866-HLTHY4U.

Healthy • Secure • Mississippi

Mississippi: Ready In An Emergency

To fulfill its mission to promote and protect the health of Mississippi residents, the Mississippi Department of Health (MDH) has been working hard to improve the state's emergency preparedness and response capabilities.

Highlighted below are some of the programs, practices and professionals that have been put in place to assist Mississippi residents in the event of a public health crisis.

33 WMD (weapons of mass destruction) Centers of Excellence and support centers are in place around the state to specifically deal with any terrorism-related event.

These centers include:

- Supplies of antidotes and medications for a potential surge of patients;

- Standardized protective clothing for health care personnel that provides protection as they care for all affected patients;
- Enhanced isolation capacity for every hospital in the event of an infectious disease outbreak;
- Decontamination equipment;
- Access to additional ambulances that will assist in triage and transportation of patients; and
- Installation and implementation of Visual Dx and TheraDoc—the latest disease detection software—which allows Mississippi physicians to better detect and more rapidly treat any disease, including bioterrorism agents.

Emergency Response Coordinators (ERCs) are placed in each of the nine

public health districts to work with local emergency management agencies and planning officials to develop and execute emergency plans. The ERCs are:

- Equipped to respond 24/7 to any state emergency;
- Trained to respond to chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear and explosive events; and
- Members of the Mississippi Health Response Team (MHRT) that can be deployed anywhere in the state during times of emergency.

Nurses trained in bioterrorism issues and diseases are working in every public health district. Their responsibilities include:

- Monitoring hospitals, clinics and other areas for



Mississippi Department of Health staff demonstrate how to use the portable decontamination unit.

Message From The State Health Officer

Brian W. Amy, MD, MHA, MPH

Flu outbreak...tornadoes...bioterrorist attacks....



These are just some of the public health threats that face Mississippi today. But do you feel fully prepared? Would you like to learn how to better protect yourself, your family and your community in the event of an emergency?

As the state's chief health authority, it is the job of the Mississippi Department of Health to protect everyone in our state against any health threat that emerges. In the aftermath of 9/11, we listened carefully to the concerns residents had about terrorism and other public health threats and, in response, stepped up our efforts to protect them by better preparing for public health emergencies.

With the recent launch of the *Healthy-Secure-Mississippi* campaign, we want to make sure we do everything we can to help you protect yourself and your family. We are working together with a variety of key leaders to ensure that the campaign is a true success and meets our goal—to educate Mississippians about available resources located throughout the state in the event of a public health emergency.

We know emergencies can strike anywhere at any time, and this initiative could not come at a more critical moment. With basic knowledge and updates, you will be able to make better decisions about your health and your family's health. The Mississippi Department of Health has the experience and expertise to be successful with this initiative, and together we can promote and protect the health of all Mississippians.

- indications of bioterrorism exposure and infectious disease outbreaks; and
- Developing plans for large-scale distribution of medical materials and pharmaceuticals as necessary.

A new Web site featuring enhanced emergency preparedness and bioterrorism sections, as well as a 24/7 information hotline have been launched.

- The redesigned site features specific information on ways in which residents can stay informed and what they need to protect themselves during a public health crisis. The site contains information to help seniors, children, people with disabilities and other special needs groups.

- The site has specific guidelines on what the public should do in each threat level.
- The 24/7 hotline:
 - is available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and TTY;
 - has the capacity to immediately inform residents of a breaking news story;
 - can add additional lines and operators to respond to incoming calls in the event of a public health crisis or emergency; and
 - relays health and programmatic information beyond traditional working hours.

These initiatives and the launch of *Healthy-Secure-Mississippi* demonstrate the Mississippi Department of Health's commitment to all Mississippians each and every day. ♦

Public Health Threats

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

A public health emergency can happen at any time. It is very important to plan and prepare for emergencies in advance. Public health threats facing Mississippi today include pandemic flu, weather-related hazards such as tornadoes and hurricanes, and the safety of the state's water supply. The Mississippi Department of Health (MDH) has one of the most highly-trained public health response teams in the nation, and we are fully prepared to protect Mississippians when disaster strikes.

Weather-Related Hazards



As all Mississippians know, weather-related hazards, from tornadoes to hurricanes, can strike at any time. The Mississippi Department of Health is prepared to address these and other natural disasters that pose possible public health threats.

Once a hurricane is predicted to hit Mississippi, MDH staff will be deployed to the area that will be affected. Once there, they can activate plans in advance to help ensure the safety of residents in the affected areas. If necessary, staff will determine evacuation procedures and ensure that ambulances are available to transport residents as needed.

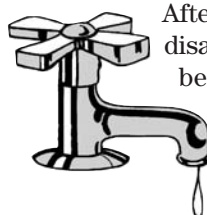
While hurricanes can be predicted in advance, tornadoes can strike rapidly, without warning, and sometimes without a thunderstorm in the vicinity. The following weather signs may mean that a tornado is approaching: a dark or green-colored sky; a large, dark, low-lying cloud; large hail; or a loud roar that sounds like a freight train.

If you are under a hurricane or tornado warning, you need to seek shelter immediately! Before a storm strikes, take these basic preparedness steps:

- Make an emergency kit with bottled water, non-perishable food, and first aid (for more on making an emergency kit, see the back page of this supplement).
- Create a family communications plan, complete with information on who to call, where to meet in the event of an emergency and copies of phone numbers and important information.
- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes and locations of emergency shelters.
- Identify potential home hazards. Be prepared to turn off electrical power when there is standing water or fallen power lines. Before you evacuate, turn off gas, water and electrical power.
- Buy a fire extinguisher and make sure your family knows where to find it and how to use it.
- Locate and secure your important papers, such as insurance policies, wills, licenses, stocks, etc.

- Inform local authorities about any special needs (i.e., elderly or bedridden people, or anyone with a disability). Never ignore an evacuation order! Be sure to take only essential items.

Safety of Water Supply



After a flood, hurricane or other natural disaster, the public water supply can become contaminated. Should this occur, the Mississippi Department of Health has a plan in place to ensure that residents remain safe and secure. It is important to listen for public announcements about the safety of the water supply, as drinking contaminated water may cause illness.

We're Working to Protect YOU!

Flu Clinics—A Success!

During the nationwide flu vaccine shortage in the fall of 2004, the Mississippi Department of Health enacted a statewide plan to distribute vaccinations in a short amount of time. Typically, a mass vaccination effort can take months to execute, and clinics can become overwhelmed with more patients than they are equipped to handle. To combat these obstacles, MDH launched the "Do It For Yourself: Do It For Your Family" campaign to ensure that high-risk residents who needed protection from the flu were vaccinated first. Flu clinics were set up in every county in Mississippi with MDH staff dispatched to each location to vaccinate residents. Through a coordinated communications effort, MDH informed the public of the locations of the clinics, and tens of thousands received their flu shots. In the end, MDH administered more than 159,000 flu vaccinations during the mass vaccination clinics.

MDH Saves Lives

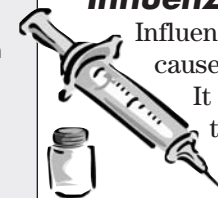
In April 2004, an Amtrak train derailed in central Mississippi, killing one person and injuring dozens of others. From its Emergency Operations Center in Jackson, the Mississippi Department of Health dispatched emergency response personnel to the scene and to area hospitals. Staff on scene were able to assist local first responders by quickly determining the number and level of injuries and helping to coordinate the transfer of those injured to appropriate facilities. Once en route, MDH staff posted at local hospitals were notified of the number of incoming patients and the severity of their injuries. As a result, local hospitals were not inundated with patients, and victims of the derailment were able to get the care they needed in an organized, effective manner. ♦

What do I do if my water is contaminated?

Safe drinking water includes bottled, boiled, or treated water. Here are some general rules to follow concerning water for drinking and cooking to avoid effects of contamination:

- Drink only bottled, boiled or treated water until your supply is tested and found safe. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites; bringing water to a rolling boil for one minute will kill most organisms.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, or to make ice.
- If you use bottled water, know where it came from. Otherwise, water should be boiled or treated before use.
- When boiling is not possible, water may also be treated with chlorine or iodine tablets, or by mixing six drops (1/8 teaspoon) of unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach (5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water. If the water is cloudy, use 12 drops (1/4 teaspoon). Mix the solution thoroughly, and let stand for about 30 minutes. However, these treatments will not kill parasitic organisms.
- Containers for water should be rinsed with a bleach solution before reusing them. Use water storage tanks and other types of containers with caution.
- Do not rely on untested devices for decontaminating water.

Influenza (Flu)



Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by several types of influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

Unlike the gradual changes that occur in the influenza viruses that appear each year during flu season, a pandemic influenza virus is one that represents a major, sudden shift in the virus' structure which increases its ability to cause illness in a large proportion of the population.

In the event of a widespread flu outbreak, MDH is prepared to respond. MDH has disease tracking capabilities and can alert thousands of health care providers within minutes of a crisis. MDH has trained staff and partners who can respond to public health emergencies and has coordinated with federal agencies and state partners to receive and distribute the vaccine once it is made available. MDH also has the capacity to vaccinate high-risk residents in a short amount of time.

Prevention

It is important to prepare ahead of time to avoid catching or spreading the flu.

- Get your flu shot.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with others.
- Clean your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. ♦



Family Readiness Checklist

Are You Prepared?

Whether a disaster is natural or man-made, preparation is essential. Here is a list of activities you and your family should do to be prepared for the next emergency.

- ✓ **DISCUSS** the type of hazards that could affect your family.
- ✓ **DETERMINE** escape routes from your home and places to meet. Pick places for your family to meet outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire, or outside your neighborhood if you cannot return home.
- ✓ **DESIGNATE** an out-of-state friend or relative as the family contact, so all your family members have a single point of contact.
- ✓ **PLAN** for pets now if you need to evacuate.
- ✓ **POST** emergency numbers by your phones, in your wallet or purse and make sure your children know how and when to call 911.
- ✓ **STOCK** non-perishable emergency supplies and a disaster readiness kit.

Disaster Readiness Kit

Every family in Mississippi needs a disaster readiness kit. There are six basics you should stock for your home: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies and special items. Keep the items in an easy-to-carry container, such as a covered trash container, backpack or duffle bag.

Water

- ☐ Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation).
- ☐ Store one gallon of water per person per day.
- ☐ Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles.

Food

- ☐ Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- ☐ Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water.
- ☐ Select food items that are compact and lightweight such as ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables, canned juices, staples (salt, sugar, pepper, spices, etc.), high-energy foods, vitamins, food for infants and comfort foods.

First Aid Kit

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and one for each car. A basic first aid kit should include items such as adhesive bandages, scissors, tweezers, latex gloves, thermometer, sunscreen, and non-prescription drugs such as aspirin/non-aspirin pain reliever and antacid.

Tools and Emergency Supplies

Keep general supplies and sanitation items in stock. Key items to include are paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, cash or travelers' checks, battery-operated radio and extra batteries, flashlight, fire extinguisher, compass, plastic storage containers, matches in a water-proof container, pencils and paper and a needle and thread. Sanitation items include toilet paper, soap, personal hygiene items, garbage bags and disinfectant.

Clothing and Bedding

Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person.

- ☐ Sturdy shoes or work boots
- ☐ Rain gear
- ☐ Blankets or sleeping bags
- ☐ Hat and gloves
- ☐ Thermal underwear
- ☐ Sunglasses

Special Items

Remember family members with special requirements, such as infants, elderly or disabled persons. Keep records of all important family documents, such as wills, insurance policies, passports and bank account numbers. And remember books and games for entertainment.

Contact the Mississippi Department of Health, nights, weekends and holidays for health information in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese and in TTY format (1-866-HLTHY4U or 1-866-458-4948).

Visit www.HealthyMS.com for more information on what to include in your readiness kit.

WHO ARE YOU GOING TO CALL?

My local Police Department _____

My local Fire Department _____

Designated Emergency Contact Person 1 _____

Designated Emergency Contact Person 2 _____

Family Doctor _____

Local Hospital _____

Pharmacist _____

Dentist _____

Local Health Department _____

Other _____